Often CAR was the group that actually wrote the sentence or two of the policy, put in the words, put in the direction, and then send it in to him and he would fine-tune it, change it, throw it out, start over, or refine it where appropriate.

Q: Well, it would give you a sense of inner workings and the paper flow at that critical juncture.

A: I was happy to work there rather than in with the Seven Dwarfs, who were in the paper flow tracking actions—get it in, wait for a signature, get it back, send it on back with the right kind of decision, and get it all filed and recorded appropriately. So, they were really in the flow; we were just off the flow—

Q: Watching it.

A: Available to provide some capability to address substance.

Chief of Public Affairs, Office of the Chief of Engineers

Q: Do you know the month when you went to your new assignment in Public Affairs in 1975? Your next assignment was Chief of Public Affairs in the headquarters of the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

Can you say a little bit about how that particular assignment became your next one?

A: Yes. First of all, in November 1974, after I'd been in CAR, I came out on the colonels list. I was in a lieutenant colonel position, so there was a push to have me move to another colonel's position. It was a matter of finding another position. While working with the engineer colonels assignment officer, a position as Chief of Public Affairs for the Corps of Engineers came up.

I don't know if the name was recommended to him or he came up with my name, but General Gribble, through the system, asked for me to be his Chief of Public Affairs. Of course I'd known him earlier when I was at the North Central Division and in work when I was in the Colonels Division and he had been Chief.

He knew I was on the colonels list. The Corps had a real public image problem at that time and was coming to a head with environmentalists thinking we weren't in the forefront of the environmental movement as we'd been trying to tell people we really were. Fred Clarke had put out his policy to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of, I think, 1969.

We in the Corps were doing pretty well in changing our paradigm internally, but this was a time when the environmentalists were really teeing off on the Corps, and a lot of high-visibility things were happening. Articles in the papers and the magazines were harpooning the Corps. The Chief's Environmental Advisory Group had been established.

The 404 wetlands program was beginning. Trying to come up with the rules and regulations for that, the Corps was seen as having not been interested because definitions had initially been to apply the Corps' 404 responsibility to navigable waters only. The courts said, "No, it's broader than that. You have to move into these other areas." A bunch of folks jumped on that and said, "Well, it shows the Corps is not really with it." In fact, the Corps was trying to let the system define itself. Anyway, General Morris was Director of Civil Works, and he felt that we needed to do more. The Public Affairs Office in the Office of the Chief of Engineers was not held in the highest regard at the time for whatever factors. The person in that job was leaving and it was a colonel's position. Typically, at that time, it had always been filled by an engineer and not a public affairs professional, as it is today, the thought being at the time that the civilians provided the professional skills, but the Chief wanted somebody who understood the Corps so the combination together would work.

So, it was sort of a natural thing for me, looking for another job, recognizing that once again it was going to give me the same kind of broad perspective of the Corps of Engineers that I had just gotten on the Army Staff being right outside the command group. It would let me interact in a new, challenging arena that I had not been associated with before. So, that's how I became Chief of Public Affairs for the Corps.

Q: Maybe we could talk a little bit more specifically about some of the major issues that you just alluded to. One of the questions, though, would have to do with trying to set the time when you went there. There was a lawsuit involving a natural resources defense counsel versus the Army on the wetlands regulations and the definition of those, which were being worked out. That was in the early spring of 1975. Do you recall that as being one of the first kinds of things that you confronted?

A: As I mentioned, there was disagreement on the extent of Corps responsibilities, and that court case expanded Corps responsibilities as we viewed them. The aftermath was active after I arrived.

The way things worked was that the Director of Civil Works ran the 404 regulatory program, and we in Public Affairs provided support as needed. By the time of my arrival, General Morris had moved in to be the Deputy Chief, and General Ernie Graves had come in to be the Director of Civil Works.

From my stead, I was trying to do what we could to improve our public affairs capabilities, and I was taking an across-the-board approach.

Very early on I'd gone out to the annual get-together of the public affairs folks in Chicago. General Morris came out and really laid some tough challenges down. It was almost brutal. He said, "You guys gotta get your acts together," and things like that. So, it wasn't all just the outside versus the inside; a lot of it was within the family.

Victor Veysey was now the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. He was the first to hold that position. He had very decided feelings that the Corps wasn't doing the right kind of job in many arenas, and one of them was public affairs. He felt we didn't know how to do

public affairs. He had some public relations background, and he was always saying, "Let's turn over Corps Public Affairs to the Army Chief of Information."

Part of that, I think, was that he was right down the hall from the Army Chief of Information and he felt that he'd have his man doing it. Other assistant secretaries have had similar thoughts, like, "Maybe I really ought to run everything. If I had it over here, then I could run it. If I have it over there, with the Chief, then I've got to work through the Chief and his staff."

When I first came over, General Gribble gave me several items of guidance. One was, he said, "Sam, we don't have a very good reputation, Corpswide, for our environmental actions, so I want you to work on that, but I'm not so sure we can really change everybody's perceptions. We ought to work on trying to do better and we ought to do it right and then maybe it'll eventually come out right."

Second, he said, "All we seem to talk about out of this office is the civil works part. I'd really like to see more awareness on the part of the Army of those things we engineers bring to the table. So, although you're seeing everything defined about our bad image being civil works, I came out of the Army Staff research and development to this job. You have just been through the district engineer selection process in MILPERCEN. We know that not everybody in the Army understands us or appreciates us, so I want you to work on that line—that's one reason I selected you." He continued, "Pretty soon we're going to have to address what's going on, I mean the flaps that come up. You're going to have to figure out your time between solving flaps and getting us better."

So, I approached my new position from that standpoint. I dialogued with people in the field and developed a public affairs action plan that had a lot of parts. Part of that plan was to get our capabilities better aligned and focused on the right kind of things. That meant more capability in our office in the Forrestal Building.

We had some folks who were wedded to their old ways. We didn't have anybody who could write anything concerning contributions to the Army, that aspect. In fact, we did speech writing for the Chief of Engineers, and I did the Army part of the speeches thereafter. We were at a place where the Civil Works Director, General Morris, had become so unhappy with the Public Affairs Office that he had set up his own communications presentations branch office. There was almost a nonspeaking relationship between that office and the Public Affairs Office that I inherited.

At the same time, out in the field, we had offices that had some really capable people, but they could never get in to see their district or division engineer with their ideas. They weren't part of the team when the division engineer got his team together. In many respects these people had good ideas and couldn't get the ear of the commander. Many others were comfortable doing just what they had been doing and didn't want to have any more responsibility or visibility because that meant more work to be done.

So, my evaluation was, "I've really got a mess here, and quite different in its aspects—some strengths and some weaknesses, certainly nothing cohesive, and no strong stovepipe like what existed everywhere else in USACE."

Not that I really wanted a strong stovepipe but, as it was, I couldn't help anybody. So, the public affairs plan really had in it several components. One important one was get the public affairs person to be part of the commander's team.

I worked that by trying to jawbone with the division engineers, trying to convince them to raise grades. Our division public affairs person was always a grade lower than the other federal regional office representatives, whatever they were.

You look at our public affairs people, and they were always a grade lower. I tried to get more people in the Public Affairs Office so they could do more than just putting out a newsletter for the division office telling who got this recognition or who had the new baby.

I mean, we really needed to provide some help to the division engineer. So, I tried to encourage appropriate staffing. Meanwhile, at the headquarters I tried to do the same thing—to add a couple of people, hire the right kind of talent so we could get involved in the right things, and maybe over time make some change. Then, over time, maybe I could cut back as some of the folks who weren't pulling their weight retired and moved on.

So, I did get a couple of extra positions, and we hired folks like Warren Pappin, John Jones, Gil Gilchrist, and Bob Hume. We brought in some young blood—people who had been out in our divisions and districts and who understood things out there, and who weren't so very happy with how things were and wanted to do better. I was really trying to attract to Headquarters, USACE, the motivated people who wanted it better. I wanted to enlist them in my campaign to get it better for Public Affairs and thus for the Corps.

Then I tried to work a raise in the grade levels of division public affairs officers. That was a tough fight. We started with the Lower Mississippi Valley Division, then the South Atlantic Division. I remember well being opposed by the personnel classification system for raising the grades of our division public affairs officers. Ralph Loschialpo's deputy at the time was the one that carried the ball for personnel.

Anyway, it came to a showdown in which the personnel classification person and I went up to see the Deputy Chief of Engineers, General Morris, because personnel was nonconcurring with what I was trying to do. I made the point about the level of the work and the importance to the Corps. We were so decentralized. The divisions were where the work was happening and the place where we were getting harpooned on this TV channel and that channel. Nobody was putting together a counteraction. We could clip newspaper articles and tell the division engineer what was happening, but nobody could or would put together a program to go out and take the offensive and tell the story of the Corps.

The fact was that our people are always a grade below everybody else in the federal regional system. I was arguing all of the reasons why they should be elevated a grade to be like their

regional peers. General Morris was hearing both sides. I think I won when I said that not only are public affairs officers down a grade, but the top personnel guy in every one of these places is one grade higher than the public affairs officer, and I didn't understand that, either.

General Morris turned to the deputy personnel person there, whose name I don't remember, and said, "Why is that?" The personnel guy said, "Well, probably because the personnel position is more important to the Corps." He was saying that, of course, to General Morris, who was the one who had been lampooning Public Affairs for not doing the job—that the Corps' public image was so bad; we ought to do something to get it right.

He now had a public affairs program that we had developed, that he was aware of, and we were trying to get it right. He understood that one thing was that you really ought to staff at a grade level that is representative of the kind of people you deal with.

So, General Morris stood up and said to him, "You said what?" So, it was repeated, and General Morris said, "We need to raise the grade level." The one being considered at that time was the Lower Mississippi Valley Division, Herb Kassner's position. Gene Brown at the South Atlantic Division and others followed here and there. We never thought that necessarily they'd all be equal across the board, as we do have differences in divisional responsibility. That was the start. I would guess, the way things go, that where they are today is where people wished it to be and made it happen. Where they're not today, those particular bosses didn't feel strongly, and the issue went away.

Q: When you brought in some new people, did you make organizational changes in how the office was structured in the headquarters to address public affairs?

A: Oh, not really; we changed a few assignments. One of the things I wanted to do was to bring somebody in who could speak "Army speak" so they could take over the speech writing bit that I was doing and have a sense for tracking Army issues.

General [Walter] Bachus at that time headed our Facility Engineer Directorate, and we had a great focus on doing facility engineering better. In Public Affairs, we had nobody to interact with it. Thus, we needed to have somebody deal with him. Military Construction had been there all along. Major General Bates Burnell was doing that and it was ongoing.

I pointed some public affairs folks so they were oriented to service, that is, a point of contact to service certain arenas. Ed Green was still working with Civil Works, but I had somebody now, Gil Gilchrist, who was to be the Facilities person. I could turn to him and say, "Run down there and find out what General Bachus wants with these."

Q: Was that Warren Pappin? Or the other person?

A: No, it wasn't Warren Pappin. Gil Gilchrist, who came from the Army Chief of Information.

Anyway, it was that kind of an orientation. Locke Mouton was the deputy director. He was a very strong person, very set in his ways, and contributed greatly to the Corps over the years. He was also very set in what he would do. He did some things well, and some things he

wouldn't do. So, that left me to do those—mainly Army-oriented activities. So, part of my challenge was organizing around those kinds of things.

We did have a few things that happened of major significance, and one was the decision on Marco Island.

Q: Oh yes, in Florida.

A: Deltona was the developer, and this had become quite a *cause célèbre,* and rightfully so. It was a major test of whether the Corps was really interested in preserving wetlands.

There were great analyses made of the cypress swamps and what was going to be cleared away to make room for this major home development. The Jacksonville District Engineer was very much involved, and the South Atlantic Division Engineer, Major General LeTellier, was very much involved.

There was a lot of dialogue all the way up to now the Director of Civil Works, General Graves. He became very personally involved in that decision and spent hours working it. He made the final decision. In the end, we held a press conference, which we had not done often at Headquarters, Office of the Chief of Engineers, now Headquarters, USACE. So, we had the chance to support General Graves in conducting his press conference. We invited the press in, and representatives attended from many of the environmental organizations that had been vociferous in their objections to the Marco Island development. General Graves announced his decision at the press conference, and we worked the press releases and orchestrated all those kinds of things.

Q: That was kind of a new thing, or at least not that common.

A: Not common at headquarters at the Office of the Chief of Engineers to have a press conference.

Q: You had to get up to speed pretty much on the public affairs arena as well, didn't you? Press conferences hadn't been something you had a lot of experience with prior to that.

A: No, but I had people to run those. I had the capability to provide the understanding of the Corps of Engineers, which I had served in at the district level. I had served on the troop side.

I knew that I didn't know about press conferences, so I would get our civilians to take care of that aspect of it. I tried to facilitate the communications problems that the Public Affairs Office had had before with the Director of Civil Works and the Chief.

The Chief at that time went to each of his directors for one-on-ones once each week. When he went to a one-on-one, he would take his deputy, the executive director—that was Russ Lamp at the time—and the Chief of Public Affairs—me. For example, the four of us would go tromping down to Civil Works and meet with General Graves. He'd go through his three-by-five cards and bring the Chief of Engineers up to date. Or we'd go to the Chief Counsel, or we'd go to Director of Military Construction, or the Postal Program, or down with General

Bachus in Facilities. So, once again, I was really getting a great overview and perspective of all the things that were going on in the Corps and the engineer side of the Army.

I could take back information in anticipation of certain things and tell my public affairs folks to follow up or see if we could take an initiative to help.

I knew I was not an expert in the technical aspects of public affairs, but I had a pretty good feeling of how things worked and of communications. I learned a lot that year—I learned a lot of things that held me in good stead ever thereafter.

For example, the fact that you have to deal with perceptions, not only reality, when you deal with people. Also, that public affairs is really communications, and there are a lot of different audiences that you need to communicate with—external, internal, your own staff, the Army external, the environmental external, the Corps employees in the field, the employees in the office. I mean there are just a lot of different audiences. I learned that if you want communications to succeed, you have to target the audience and design communications for that audience.

Sometimes there can be more than one target audience, but you really have to know what messages are intended, and you have to change the design of your communication to target each audience. I can't tell you how much that understanding has helped me. I rely on that now in talking with folks.

When you prepare a briefing, you need to develop your boilerplate briefing on how you communicate your intended information, issue, solution. When you go to brief General X, you need to sit back and make sure you know what you want General X to come away with and what you want to convince him of. You need them to redesign your briefing, be prepared to throw out charts, change charts, change words on charts so that you're targeting General X for that briefing.

Or if you want to take it out to the outside media, you can't just go with your standard pack of charts. If you go with your standard package to every audience, not stand back and look at it critically, then you're going to have something in there that's going to turn them off, irritate them, or cause you to lose. So, you really need to redesign your brief for the audience.

Now you might have two people you want to target. Then you've got to make sure that even though you're speaking to General X, you know that Colonel Y is looking at it from a different angle and agenda. You want to convince him, so you're going to have to put the things essential to his perspective in there to convince him, but making sure they don't kill you with General X.

Just understanding the reality that you have to design a communication or a briefing for a particular audience and target them is invaluable. We in the world so often don't do that. You always know because you get burned by the result when it happens.

Some people don't understand why they got burned. That's why I've never liked slides and Vu-Graphs printed up so nice and clean and beautiful—because then you're reluctant to

change them. I'd rather have the old type Vu-Graph—running it through the copy machine, black on yellow. If all of a sudden I determine, "Hmm, those words are going to turn somebody off and it really doesn't say it the way I want to say it," then it's very easy to change that chart. So, the key is to really convey the message you want to convey, rather than look pretty.

So, I learned a lot from that year, from all those kinds of aspects, and in dealing with people and trying to deal with a whole bunch of different kinds of issues from organization to the media.

Q: Again, it was an assignment that exposed you to the whole Office of the Chief of Engineers staff, I mean, at various levels throughout the organization.

A: Yes. The Office of the Chief of Engineers staff and the field, too, because I went out to a lot of different things and went with General Gribble on several trips. The Tennessee–Tombigbee Waterway was an issue that year because costs were higher than projected. I accompanied General Morris down to visit South Atlantic Division headquarters for General LeTellier to explain why projections were different from what was being experienced.

So, I did get to participate at a pretty high level, in what was a very intense year of education.

Q: Lock and Dam 26 was—

A: Lock and Dam 26 was really up there as a hot issue and a very high visibility.

Q: The wetlands regulations.

A: The wetlands regulations, right. All those were things that were moving along. So, it was a good time to watch all those hot Corps issues. Hardly anybody got to mess with Lock and Dam 26 besides General Morris. He really was orchestrating it, pulling things together, and it was fairly well pulled together as far as the game plan at that time.

Q: You already mentioned the fact of Victor Veysey becoming the first assistant secretary at that point. Is there anything else in that relationship—I mean, did the strength of the Corps organization improve sufficiently then? I don't recall right now how long he was in.

A: In terms of public affairs, whereas the Director of Civil Works went to see him on the civil works program, I went over to see him initially on the public affairs program and had him explain to me what he thought we needed. Then I want back to brief our public affairs plan to get the Corps up on public affairs.

General Gribble wanted me to do that. He wanted a dialogue between me trying to show Secretary Veysey what we were doing in the Corps and that we had a proactive plan to try to make things better.

Victor Veysey, like many others since then, had a feeling that if you didn't read good news about the Corps in the *Washington Post* then it wasn't good news. That's really a fallacy. I

mean, there were lots of words printed out in the hinterlands about the Corps—giving them credit for good works and harpooning them for different kinds of things that were going on. In this town of Washington, though, what the Corps of Engineers does or doesn't do is not always first-rate news as far as the *Washington Post* is concerned. When you go home and watch your news channel at night, that's national news, not the locals, and they're not always interested.

I mean, the five o'clock local news, before the national news, might cover Four Mile Run flooding back when it was flooding south Arlington, but now that the Corps has built Four Mile Run, there are no longer floods. I mean, it's not news any more, so you don't get the positive story in the *Post.*

Q: Yes.

A: Victor Veysey felt—and of course he had Marco Island and all these things up on the screen— "Why isn't the Corps getting inches of news space showing that we really are for the environment?"

It was a very difficult thing. I was going back and forth to see him for a while until he must have figured we were at least working at it—and lost interest in dealing with me, so I stopped going. He would never say we were really there in Public Affairs, but he at least wasn't fussing at us for not trying.

Q: Did you get involved in the public meetings that were going on in the field?

A: That's handled by the field. I did that when I was in the Chicago District, as I mentioned.

Q: Then as Chief of Public Affairs you didn't really need to—

A: No. We would know and would be kept advised of major things, and we always knew when the meetings were going on in Marco Island, for instance, and that sort of thing. In our decentralized USACE organization, that's really a division and district thing.

Q: Did you find the suspicion of Public Affairs in the Office of the Chief of Engineers? Sometimes an organization that's under attack from all sides sort of closes in on itself.

A: I think it was that way. There was a suspicion of that. The organization closed in on itself, didn't stand up to be counted, and did a few things like saying "We can't support you, Civil Works, with speeches." That had caused General Morris to set up his own communications. They then became competitors with Public Affairs.

Q: It still exists.

A: They then became competitors, and thereafter it was vogue to say bad things about Public Affairs, whether you wanted to or not.

So, there really was a suspicion, a feeling that Public Affairs doesn't cut it, they don't understand the Corps, and why should I spend time making them understand? It was not a very good atmosphere.

Q: Although this happened later, what do you think about the change to career public affairs persons being the Chief of Public Affairs instead of engineer officers. That happened maybe around the late '70s, I think?

A: I guess I was always suspicious of that, but I only spent a year there. I guess it's a matter of how fast a person can learn about the Corps and how receptive are they to understand that you do have to understand a decentralized organization like the Corps, as opposed to where the Army has been. We've had some good ones; in particular Bill Garber, I thought, was superb.

When I was Deputy Chief and working with Bill, he didn't have a qualm about coming up and saying, "I don't understand this; tell me about it" or "I think we ought to do this." His aggressiveness and assertiveness and ability was just right for the position—and he had then all those technical capabilities that I didn't have. I mean, he could set up editorial boards and he could get things done that I was not trained to do. He had a sense for having a game plan. That's what we never had before my arrival and what I tried to start—but we couldn't just have a game plan at the headquarters; we had to have a game plan in each division, in each district.

Bill Garber came up and had the capability to formulate with his assistants a game plan to use Chief of Engineers Hank Hatch's strengths to go out and interact, to get him involved here and there, and to communicate the "Corps." It really depends, to answer your question, on getting the right person for the job. So, if you get the right public affairs specialist, that's better than having the right engineer in that position. The right engineer in the position might be better than having the wrong public affairs specialist.

So, I think it's fine.

Q: We just have a new one now, the last couple of weeks; who I don't know.

A: Who is it?

Q: I haven't met him yet. Colonel Monteverde, but he's called "Monty." He came from the Pentagon.

To follow up on something—I heard you speak to the public affairs officers in Louisville when they had one of their meetings. I remember one of the things from your remarks, and I also remember it provoked some discussion in the hallways.

A: When they tried to throw me out afterwards, you mean?

Q: I may not even be remembering the right thing, but I remember that you were talking about placing, I think, and this is my interpretation, less emphasis on command information, less

emphasis on the newsletter and those kinds of things, and a more aggressive approach to dealing with external media sources. Is this something that also reflects back to your experience at this time?

A: Absolutely. I really have already commented on it. It's not necessarily a reflection that they in the Public Affairs Office should not emphasize the command information component; what I was suggesting was that they overemphasized their newsletters. My feeling was that in an organization that's still austerely staffed, where there were only two or three people in the Public Affairs Office, with one of them spending almost full time keeping the newsletter up to date—that, I said, was not putting our effort where it should be. A newsletter is easy to do, it's fun to do, and as long as you fill the time with something easy and fun you might not ever get around to doing the more important things.

That comment in Louisville was a reflection of my feeling that way, having been a division engineer since my Public Affairs days, having watched it and having tried to convert my folks. Newsletters were all right as long as they did everything else that was needed.

Now, I wasn't against command information; what I was saying was, "If your newsletter informs the command about policies and functions and things that are happening and things they need to know, okay; spend your effort on that, but not on new babies, retirements, and the list of things that you find in most of them."

In fact, my whole emphasis was that they, the public affairs professionals, ought to be focusing on programs for making their external audiences understand what the Corps was all about. That takes a lot more work because you've got to get out of the office and you've got to go visit editorial offices and papers in various places.

Back then it seemed like we were dividing up things 50 percent external and 50 percent internal, and the Corps' focus ought to be 25 percent internal and 75 percent external. Further, our division and district commanders know how to communicate motivation to their subordinates; you don't need a person in Public Affairs cranking stuff out, especially when it's easy. Therefore, I felt we ought to extend ourselves in getting higher caliber people who could do more than just crank out a newsletter—that would use their full talents better.

So, that was it. What I did was tell my views to a lot of people in the audience that day who were persons who really took pride in their newsletters and who spent their efforts on it—and they knew just exactly what I was talking about. It wasn't that we had bad newsletters, but in a zero sum game can you afford to have people that are so proud of the newsletter, they spend every moment of their day getting it even better when the rest of the mission goes awry? So, there was very considerable debate that spilled over into the halls.

Q: That was probably part of the intent, right?

It got people's attention.

A: Sure did.

Q: Do you have any other things that we haven't asked you about, directly related to this assignment?

A: Well, that was the year we also had the towboat *Sergeant Floyd* motoring about our waterways.

Q: Okay.

A: It was part of the bicentennial celebration. It was certainly a good time. The Corps won the Silver Anvil award for the *Sergeant Floyd,* which carried Corps exhibitions from inland port to inland port.

Q: This is a little different than some of the questions we've asked from your other assignments, but could you take a few minutes to give an assessment of General Gribble as Chief?

A: Yes. General Gribble was the epitome of a person, in my estimation, who had very quick capability to understand what was going on. He was truly a nice person who dealt with people in a most personal manner. It was not that he wasn't tough—and he had a toughness that was as tough as anybody—but his way of dealing with people was personable. He was not one to be out talking up something, not an external kind of person, but a more internal, get to the heart of the matter, interact with those needed, show them we're together, get the job done, solid type of person. He was very well respected in the previous position he held as Chief of Research and Development for the Army.

He had an interactive spirit with people on the Army Staff, the Chief of Staff and the Vice Chief of Staff, during that time. He would call them and dialogue things.

He was a quick learner, one who quickly received information and could hand back guidance or counsel to General Graves or someone else as to what the situation was or how it was developing.

I enjoyed very much working for him in the Chicago District. Although he was at division headquarters, we were both in the same town, Chicago. I didn't see him often. I enjoyed very much coming back to work for him my years in Public Affairs.

I had a personal relationship with him and I saw him as my mentor. From the time in Chicago that I first met him, I respected him. I was a captain and enjoyed working for him. I didn't have too many interactions with him, but I saw him as a person I could approach and talk with.

There were occasions after Chicago that I would call him at home and ask him about things. He was always very forthright, down to earth, and helpful. One example of that—I believe I covered this earlier—was when I was at Fort Leavenworth and Ernie Edgar came out and told me I was going to Vietnam for my next assignment and would go to battalion command. That was the good news. Then he said this same afternoon I'd get a letter from General Harold K. Johnson, the Chief of Staff, saying that the Army had set up this new province

senior adviser program and was hand selecting people to go back, based on their having served their previous tour.

The sector adviser would serve for two years, leaving his family in the Philippines, with trips back and forth. The Army needed continuity in that very important program.

General Johnson had just been out to talk to us as a class about three weeks before about how he was going to set this program up. I thought then, "Boy, I'm glad I don't have to worry about that one"—because he was talking about lieutenant colonels and I was still a major. Of course I was on a promotion list, but the way he described it, I really didn't think it applied to me.

Anyway, I got that letter that afternoon. So, there I was, selected for command and selected for the province senior adviser program. General Johnson, the Chief of Staff of the Army, said he'd really like to have a response from me in a couple of weeks as to whether I'd accept the program or not.

Immediately, all of my compatriots at Leavenworth divided into two camps; one was, "You can't tell the Chief of Staff no; you must take it," and the other was, "You ought to go to command."

There were four or five of us who were on the list from out there. I was in a quandary because I believed we really needed an important province senior adviser program. One of the calls I made was to General Gribble, and I asked him, "What do you think?" At that time I believe he was Deputy to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development. He was certainly at the Pentagon and on the Army Staff, and a two star by this time. He thought it over for a while, and he said, "Well, it really is a very important program; we really need it. I think you ought to just do what you want; if you want to do that, go do it; if you want to command, go do that." Then he said, "In the end, I don't think the Army will credit that senior advisory position like they say they will—that is, the equivalent to command. So, although I believe it, and the Army is sincere about it, I think when push comes to shove for future selection boards for command and things like that, it won't stand up in lieu of command. So, if you really have your heart set on command, which is what you really told me, you probably ought to go to command."

So, with that, I sat down and wrote General Johnson my letter. Here it was coming from my mentor—it validated where I was in my own thinking. I had been taught through all our schooling that a soldier, officer, should aspire to command in combat. Here I had the opportunity to command an engineer battalion in combat. Yes, this was an important job too. It was what I aspired to do. So, that's how I expressed it in my letter—that I really wanted to follow my long-term aspirations to go command in combat since I had that opportunity.

Back to General Gribble. That was an instance where he was available as a mentor and very approachable and easy to talk with.

Q: Did he retire while you were Chief of Public Affairs or was that slightly thereafter?

A: No, afterwards.

Commander, 7th Engineer Brigade

Q: From ’76 until ’78 you were commander of the 7th Engineer Brigade and the Ludwigsburg–Kornwestheim military community commander. I wonder if we could start with discussing how you got that position and how you got that job.

A: Well, basically I came out on the engineer troop command list from the OPMS centralized board selection process, and through that process I was programmed to the 20th Engineer Brigade at Fort Bragg, I think because I had had airborne experience in the past. Colonel Herc Carrol had been programmed to go overseas as commander, 7th Engineer Brigade. His wife, Sue, became very ill, later died of cancer, and so he removed himself from the command list that year. So, it was a consideration on how to rework the list—what to do about it. Because I was in the position as a public affairs officer, I was programmed after a two-year tour for the 20th Brigade a summer later, ’77. When this came up I spoke with General Gribble, the Chief, and asked to be released early from my position so I could go to the 7th Engineer Brigade and take command. He approved that request and MILPERCEN, Colonels Division, processed the change, and so I was assigned to command the 7th Engineer Brigade in summer 1976.

Colonel Kem received the colors of the 7th Engineer Brigade from Lieutenant General Frederick J. Kroesen, Commanding General, VII Corps, in July 1976. The departing commander was Colonel Harry Lombard (right).

Q: Before we start talking about that position and its responsibilities, could you give me a sort of overview of the engineer troop organization in USAREUR at that time, how the 7th Engineer Brigade fit into the engineer structure in USAREUR.

A: Surely. It had been for years in about the same mode. Basically there were and are two Corps, the V and the VII Corps. Each Corps had two divisions and some other combat elements. In each of those divisions there was the divisional engineer battalion. In the other combat elements that I referred to, which might be a cavalry regiment or